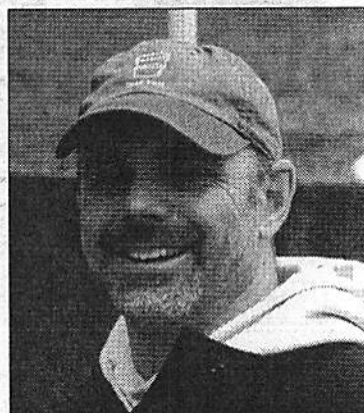


A visit with Rich Potash

4th of July Chairman planning annual festival

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Rich Potash and his family have lived in Duxbury for 8 years. As co-chairman of Duxbury's annual 4th of July Parade, Rich recently chatted with us about the upcoming festivities and what really goes in to coordinating all those floats.



Rich Potash

THE POTASH FILE:

Favorite book: Predictably Irrational.

Favorite movie: Young Frankenstein.

Family members: Wife Annie and children Rebecca and Benjamin.

Pet peeve: Arrogant people.

Hobbies: Skiing and Tae-Kwon-Do.

Where is your favorite spot in Duxbury: Easy question, the beach.

How did you get involved with the committee? Don and Nancy Reed have been committee members for years. Nancy was our realtor when we moved to Duxbury and shortly thereafter they suggested I join the committee.

How many people are on the committee? There are 20 people on the committee plus some non-official folks who attend our meetings and help us out.

How long has the parade been going on? This is the 119th annual parade. Duxbury's parade is the second longest-running in the country.

How was this year's parade theme decided? We start meeting in February and picked the theme early on. We each try to bring one or two ideas to the meeting. We talk about how a theme applies to the 4th, America and patriotism and if a similar theme was used in a recent parade. We also consider if a theme provides opportunities for a variety of float ideas. After putting all that in the mix, we have one or two rounds of voting and pick the theme. I think this year's theme, "American Classics," really opens up the options for float participants.

How are funds raised for the parade? Our funding comes from three sources: The annual appropriation, voted on at town meeting, ad space in the 4th of July booklet purchased by businesses and individuals and donations to the Margery Parcher Fund by town residents. The donations are used for everything from hiring bands and entertainers for the parade to buying gas

for the generators at the beach party.

What is the most challenging part of organizing the whole thing? No one part stands out. It's more the case of a million details. Fortunately, many of the committee members and the people we work with have volunteered for years so they know the process, jump right in and work extremely hard to make the beach party and parade a success.

Is it logistically difficult to coordinate police, volunteers etc.? Everyone is very supportive of the events. We meet with representatives from the Police Department, Fire Department, harbor master and volunteers before the events to get feedback on last year's event and plan this year's event. Again, many of the people have been involved with the parade for years, which makes a big difference.

What is the most enjoyable part of being involved with the parade? I enjoy working with the people on the committee. You have a group of people who volunteer to work from February to July to put on a celebration for the town. It really is a great group, hardworking but fun.

Who decides which float wins? We have a group of judges who review each float before the start of the parade.

How are the floats judged? Floats are judged on Relationship to the theme, details, costume, props, originality, special effects and overall presentation.

What do the winners receive? There are cash prizes for the top three floats in each category.

Have there ever been any serious problems on parade day? Nothing comes to mind. There are always issues with events involving this many people but we work to resolve them quickly.

What happens if it rains? A few years ago there was a severe lightning storm which hit at the middle of the beach party. We successfully got everyone off the beach. As far

as what happens if it rains, we just cross our fingers and hope it does not. We cannot reschedule the parade because so many of our bands and parade participants come from as far away as Canada.

What are some of your favorite theme ideas? I like this year's theme to see what ideas people see as American Classics. As an engineer, I also liked American Ingenuity.

Is it difficult to come up with a new theme every year? Not really. Someone might suggest a good idea and then we'll realize it was the theme four years ago so we have to set it aside. Next year we hope to have a theme that will tie into the town's 375th celebration.

How do you think Duxbury's parade compares to other towns' on the South Shore? I have not seen any other parades on the South Shore. A number of communities were forced to cancel their celebrations due to a lack of funding, so I think it is good that Duxbury—thanks to the generosity of its businesses and residents—has been able to keep the tradition alive.

What is your favorite part about 4th of July in Duxbury? Halls Corner just before the parade starts. All the participants (service men and women, police, fire, politicians, entertainers, bands, floats) are lined up and ready to go. Washington Street is filled with people looking toward Halls Corner. After six months of work, the parade is just about to begin. There's an amazing culmination of energy at that moment.